

Manager's View

**A monthly e-mail message from
County Manager Tom Zdunek**

“Projects and More Projects”

March 2013

Lately it seems we've become inundated with projects of all types. Every time I meet with staff there is discussion about a current or planned project of some type or another. The good thing about all these projects is that they are intended to help us provide better, more effective and more efficient services to citizens. After all, that's why county government is here—to serve our citizens and be good stewards of tax dollars.

So what do we mean when we say “project?” The Project Management Institute defines a project as a “temporary group activity designed to produce a unique product, service or result.” This definition differentiates projects from ongoing, routine operations or activities you may perform. Building a bridge is a project—it has a beginning and an end and when it's done, it's done. Maintaining that bridge, however, is not a project. It is an ongoing task to extend its life and keep it in good working order. That's a simple example, but you get the point.

With so many projects underway across the county, it's easy for some of them to lose momentum and get stalled somewhere along the way. That's something we need to avoid. If we've started a project and devoted resources to it, we need to ensure that it gets completed—on time and on budget. Especially if that project's completion will help us provide better or more efficient services. Unfortunately, I've found that a number of our projects have become stuck.

In order to help move some of these projects along, I've formed an Office of Project Management within my office. This group will be organizing not to take over projects that are underway, but to step in and provide assistance and help in moving stalled projects toward completion. This is being done with existing staff and resources because, like you, I've got to live within my budget. More information about this new service will be coming out in the near future, but I wanted to let you know that this effort is designed with the goal of closing out projects so that the benefits of those completed projects can be realized. That benefits the county, and more importantly, the citizens we're here to serve.